

MARICOPA COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

ADOPTIONS UNIT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Agencies

Q: I work for an adoption agency. How can I receive information on an Adoption Certification (AC) case?

A: Adoption agency staff that wish to speak with the Adoptions Unit staff about a specific AC case should have their agency's name on the Adoption Certification application. Be sure to include an email address on the application to allow the Unit to be able to communicate with you via email about the case.

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Q: I work for the Department of Child Safety (DCS). How can I receive information on an Adoption Certification (AC) or Adoption (JA) case?

A: DCS staff can email the Adoptions Unit from work email and inquire about whether specific documents have been received in adoptions cases.

Q: What do I file with the Clerk of Court for Adoption Certification (AC) cases?

A: Please file your Adoption Certification applications, CPS clearance registry, and home studies with the Clerk of Court. It is only fingerprint cards that need to be submitted directly to the Adoptions Unit.

Q: If there is a problem with the Adoption Certification Order that I just received, how can I get that resolved?

A: If it is clearly a typo (e.g., there is a typo in the applicant's name), then email the Adoptions Unit with the case number and applicant name(s), explain what the error is, and we can ask the Commissioner to issue a corrected Certification Order. However, if it is not clearly a typo, then you would need to file a formal document outlining your question or request with the Clerk of Court. Once the document is filed we will forward it on the Commissioner for review.

Q: I have a case-specific question regarding the home study (e.g. whether or not a specific type of pool fence will be acceptable). Can the Adoptions Unit answer this question?

A: Generally, case specific questions about what the Judicial Officer will find acceptable cannot be answered by the Adoptions Unit. If you have a case-specific question like this, you would need to file with the Clerk of Court a written letter outlining your question. Once it is filed, we can forward the letter to the assigned judicial officer for review.

Q: Our agency uses an encrypted system for privacy and security. Can I send messages to you that way?

A: The Adoptions Unit is not authorized to set up profiles through other agencies to receive secure messages. However, we are in the process of setting up a fax line so that you can submit questions by fax if your agency is unable to communicate with the Adoptions Unit by email.

Q: If I didn't receive a copy of the Adoption Certification Notice or Certification Order in the mail, how can I get a new one?

A: If your agency has an email address on file the Clerk of Court, you will no longer receive hard copies of these documents. Instead you will receive them electronically to the email address on file with the Clerk.

If you do not have an email address on file and your agency never received a copy of one of these documents, you can contact the Clerk of Court either in person or by phone (602)37-CLERK(25375) to see if they are able to re-send the order to you. The Adoptions Unit is not authorized to send out copies of filed documents.

Q: If the email address that the Clerk of Court has on file for my agency is no longer active, how can we update our email address for electronic distributions?

A: Email the Adoptions Unit to let us know the current email address for electronic distributions, and we will forward the information to the Clerk of Court and ensure that the system gets updated.

Q: Can the Clerk of Court also email the documents directly to the applicants?

A: No, the Clerk of Court is only able to electronically distribute documents to attorneys or agencies. Hard copies will be distributed to the applicants at the address listed for them in the file.

Q: When I file an Application for Certification to Adopt, do I have to wait until a case number is assigned to submit the supporting documents (i.e. home study, CPSCR, copy of level one fingerprint clearance cards)?

A: No. You can file the supporting documents at the same time as the Application if you choose to do so. If you submit all of the documents at the same time, the Adoption Unit is able to review the case and forward it to the judicial officer for review more quickly than when they are received separately.

Q: I already filed my home study at the same time as the Application, but I have just received a standard form Notice telling me that the home study is due by a certain date. Why am I receiving this?

A: Any time an Application for Certification is filed, the Court is required to issue this standard form Notice, even if you have already submitted the home study. Receiving the Notice is not an indication of whether or not we have received the home study.

Q: For Application for Certification and Adoption cases, do all adult household members have to be fingerprinted and on the Department of Child Safety Clearance Record (CPSCR)? Are there any exceptions if the person is only residing there temporarily, if there is a disability or medical condition, or other extenuating circumstance?

A: All adult household members should either have a current level one fingerprint clearance card or have a state and federal criminal records check by submitting fingerprints through the Adoptions Unit. If your agency is seeking any kind of exception to this in a particular case due to extenuating circumstances, you would need to submit that request formally in writing, filing it with the Clerk of Court. Ultimately, a determination regarding any such request would be up to the assigned Judicial Officer.

Tips for faster AC case processing:

If the applicants/adult household members have level one fingerprint clearance cards—be sure to file copies of the clearance cards.

Please include an agency contact email address on applications and home studies so that the Adoptions Unit can reach out to the agency if there are any documents missing.

Attorneys

Q: I am an attorney or guardian ad litem. How can I receive information on an Adoption Certification (AC) or Adoption (JA) case?

A: Attorneys, including private attorneys and guardians ad litem, who wish to speak with the Adoptions Unit staff about a specific AC or JA case can complete a notice of appearance and file this notice in the case. Be sure to include an email address to allow the Unit to be able to communicate with you via email about the case.

General

Q: How can I sign up for Adoptions Unit email blasts?

A: Anyone already receiving email blasts or emails about the Adoptions Unit launch directly from the Unit will be automatically subscribed to our email blast service. If you have been having emails forwarded to you or are not currently receiving emails from us and would like to do so, you can use the sign up option at the bottom of our Adoptions webpage:

<http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/SuperiorCourt/JuvenileCourt/adoption.asp>

Q: Can I talk with someone over the phone?

A: Absolutely. But, adoption cases are confidential, and we may not be able to verify your identity over the phone. For example, the Court's caller id system may only display "Qwest" for some cellular phones. As a result, if we cannot verify your identity, we cannot give you information about a specific case over the phone. However, we can always give you general information about adoptions and help you decide whether to email or visit us in person to if your question is about a specific case. We will also make every effort to provide prompt service in emergency situations.

Q: How quickly will you respond to my email?

A: We will respond with 1 business day for standard questions. However, if your email is extensive or unusual, our response may be to confirm receipt of your email and let you know we need additional time to address your request.

Q: How should I contact you if my question or issue is urgent?

A: If you believe you have an emergency issue, please call the Adoptions Unit, and Unit staff will assist you in determining how best to resolve your emergency. But, if you have an emergency issue and you are already at one of our Juvenile Court locations, please visit us in person.

Q: Where are you located at Durango?

A: Please ask for Adoptions Unit staff at the Durango information desk. The Adoptions Unit is located in the Officer of the Day and Community Services Unit space.

Q: Where are you located at Southeast?

A: The Adoptions Unit is located on the first floor of the Southeast Juvenile Court outside Courtroom 9. It will be on your right as you enter the Southeast courtrooms door after you have passed through Court Security.

Q: Should I still email the Clerk of Court for status updates on any adoptions cases?

A: No. The Clerk of Court's "adoptionsinquiries" email address is no longer active.

Q: Will the Adoptions Unit answer any and all questions on the status of my adoption case?

A: There may be some instances where, if you are authorized to receive information on an adoption certification or adoption case and you are calling about the status of your order, you may be asked to contact the division directly.

Fingerprints

Q: How long does it take to get fingerprint results?

A: On average, it takes about 2-3 weeks* for the Court to receive results back from fingerprints. If the fingerprints are rejected by Department of Public Safety (DPS) or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), then the individual would need to re-submit fingerprints which we would send for processing at no additional charge. The re-submission would take about 2-3 weeks* for DPS/FBI processing. If the resubmitted fingerprints are again rejected, then the Adoptions Unit would submit a name check request, which may take about 1-2 weeks*.

We recommend that anyone submitting fingerprints to the Adoptions Unit provide two (2) fingerprint cards in the event that the first set of fingerprints is rejected. For individuals whose prints have been rejected and have not provided a second set of fingerprints, the Adoptions Unit sends a letter advising of the rejection and that we need an additional set of fingerprints.

**These timeframes are averages based on Adoption Unit observations and historic data. Individual time frames will vary and can take up to 4-8 weeks depending on DPS volume.*

Q: Why were the fingerprints rejected?

A: When fingerprints are rejected it is due to inability of DPS or FBI to read the prints, and has nothing to do with criminal history. This could be because the prints were too faint, not enough surface area of the fingers were rolled, or some other such issue inhibiting DPS/FBI technology from reading the prints.

Q: Is there any way to expedite the fingerprint process?

A: No, the Adoptions Unit sends off all fingerprints to DPS for processing as soon as we are able to—usually within 1 business day. Further, DPS has been clear in their communications with us that there is no way to expedite their process. So individuals cannot pay a fee to expedite the results, and our Unit cannot ask DPS to expedite fingerprints.

Q: Which Adoption Unit address should I use to send fingerprint cards?

A: You can use either the Durango or Mesa address. To improve customer service, the Unit will receive and process fingerprints at both addresses.

Q: Is a fingerprint card for a criminal history records inquiry required in an Adoption Certification or Adoption case if there is a level one fingerprint clearance card completed in the case already?

A: No, as long as the fingerprint clearance card is not expired. But, there could be instances where a judicial officer requests this information and requires it based on judicial discretion after careful review of the case.

Q: How can I request new stock of blank fingerprint cards?

A: You can email your request to the Adoptions Unit. It may take 2-3 weeks to fulfill the request.

Q: How long are fingerprint results and DCS registry clearances valid for?

A: Pursuant to Administrative Order, DPS results are valid for 1 year, FBI results are valid for 3 years, and DCS registry clearances are valid for 1 year.

Adoption Documents

Document	Case Type	AC Case	JA Case
Application for Certification	AC	file with COC	n/a
Notice of Appearance	AC & JA	file with COC	file with COC (no copy needed by Adoptions Unit)
Letter to judicial officer w/addt'l information requested by court	AC	file with COC	n/a
Letter to judicial officer indicating a desire to withdraw application	AC	file with COC	n/a
Letter to judicial officer requesting additional time to submit report	AC	file with COC	n/a
Reports to the Court	AC & JA	file with COC	submit to Adoptions Unit
Copy of Level One Clearance Card	AC & JA	file with COC	submit to Adoptions Unit
DCS Records Clearance	AC & JA	file with COC	submit to Adoptions Unit
Completed fingerprints to be processed with DPS	AC & JA	submit to Adoptions Unit	submit to Adoptions Unit
Petition for Adoption	JA	n/a	file with COC
Motions/Responses/Replies	JA	n/a	file with COC (w/copy to Adoptions Unit for judicial officer)
Child Support Questionnaire	JA	n/a	file with COC (no copy needed)
Notice of Lodging Post-Adoption Agreement	JA	n/a	file Notice of Lodging with COC (w/orig. Post-Adopt Agreement & copy of Notice to Adoptions Unit for JO)
All other documents on JA Cases	JA	n/a	submit to Adoptions Unit